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ABSTRACT

Beginning with a review of the increasing literature concerning job-related teacher stress, this study examines the particular stress and burnout experiences of school teachers in Venezuela since the incorporation by law in 1980 of "Educacion Basica" (basic education) as a new level of the school system (grades 1-9). To compare teachers acting in a conventional situation with those functioning in schools currently implementing the new "Educacion Basica" (EB) system, 488 teachers from grades 1-6 were interviewed in 1984 using a variety of data collection forms. Following a description of each of these forms are discussions of the study's results with regard to teachers' stress and burnout level, stress-inducing factors, and situations perceived as potential stress reducers. The study's findings indicate that (1) EB teachers experience more stress than teachers in traditional schools, (2) teachers working in the capital city of Caracas experience higher levels of emotional stress than those working in more rural settings, (3) male teahcers experience more frequency of stress than female teachers, (4) political party pressure on teachers is the lowest stressful source, and (5) "insufficient pay" is the Venezuelan teacher's greatest single stress inducer. Three pages of references and a series of 13 information tables conclude the document. (JBM)

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Job-stress and Burnout of the Venezuelan Teachers: Related to Educational Systems Change (Educación Básica)

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Venezuela is a transitional society, rapidly moving towards modernization, and for this same reason displaying characteristics such as a certain role anarchy derived from a lack of organization (Albornoz,1977). At the same time Venezuela is one of the few Latin American democracies, and these forms of government have dedicated special attention to the development of the educational system. During the last twenty six years, there have been peaceful elections every five years, which reflects a sound political development and a clear preference of Venezuelans for democracy as a way of living. Neverthless, due to a lack of continuity in public planning and administration, these periodical changes represent a source of instability and anxiety for people working in the public sector, including school teachers.

At the present, Venezuelan teachers are experiencing more pressure than ever, for reasons inherent to their profession, and due to causes shared with the rest of Venezuelans.

Sakharov and Faber (1983) have emphasized the importance of burnout phenomena within a particular context of historical, political, and social circumstances. It is the intention of this study to investigate job stress and burnout amongst Venezuelan school teachers in a particular context, the implementation of a major educational innovation in Venezuela, The Educación Básica (EB) system. Thus an attempt will be made to relate the main findings to certain characteristics of current day Venezuela.

The literature concerning job-related teacher stress (Blase, 1983; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977; Milstein and Golaszewski, 1983; Pettegrew and Wolf, 1982; Youngs, 1978), teacher burnout (Alexander, Adams, and Martrey, 1983; Sakharov and Farber, 1983; Schwab and Iwanicki, 1982) is constantly increasing.

The meaning of the term, job stress and burnout is not agreed upon among the researchers in this area, and it lacks the theoretical basis for interpreting qualitative results (Feitler and Tokar, 1983).

Stress occurs when there is a perceived excess of environmental demands over an individual's perceived capability to meet them and when failure to meet these demands has important perceived consequences (McGrath, 1970). French and Caplan (1972) explain job stress, using Person: Environment Fit theory, postulating that the more descrepancy there is between organizational need and the capacity of the individual to adapt, the higher the level of job stress the person gets.

Research on job burnout has a history of less than a decade, studies on teachers' burnout is even more recent. Burnout is defined in the dictionary as "worn-out or to become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength or resources. However, the definitions of burn-out in the literature are varied. It is commonly known as a response to stress encountered on the job (Cherniss and Krantz, 1983). Shaw, Bensky and Dickson (1981) described job burnout, specifically in teachers, as "an overload of unclear, discrepant, and/or unmanageable school system demands.

A situation is created whereby the teachers cannot cope or adjust to the situation or stressors." Beasley, Myette and Serna (1983) define burnout as "an ultimate result of stress in which the individual experiences exhaustion and may be unable to continue his/her present work situation and leave, or may become cynical, distant and uncaring".

Farber (1983) points out that some of the definitions of burnout are probably mistaken, and argues that burnout does not seem to have a linear relationship with stress. "It is not a unidimensional problem with easily grasped causes and solutions, but rather a complex issue with roots in intrapsychic, interpersonal, occupational, organizational, historical and social phenomena." Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) added new aspect to the definition, "a progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose, and concern as a result of conditions of work". It is suggested that burnout is caused not by the presence of job stressors but rather by the absence of job motivation.

Eventhough there are different ways of defining and perceiving job burnout, there has been a general consensus that symptoms of burnout include attitudinal, emotional and physical components (Cherniss and Krantz, 1983). Burnout manifests itself in different symptomatic ways and in different degrees from person to person. The common symptoms among teachers who experience these states are; high blood pressure, ulcers, absenteeism, excessive drinking, and over-eating (Milstein and Golaszewski, 1983; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Pettegrew and Wolf, 1982). The Maslach Burnout Inventory

(Maslach and Jackson,1981) was the most frequently used instrument in studies concerning burnout in teachers (Beasley, Myettee, Serna, 1983). Maslach describes the burnout syndrome in three categories; emotional exhaustion, depersonalized response to recipients, and lack of satisfaction to an accomplished job.

Numerous studies which have attempted to identify job related stressors in teaching professions indicate poor salary, involuntary transfer, excessive work load, dealing with students' discipline problems, poor student motivation, poor attitudes in learning, incompetent administration, role conflict and ambiguity, and lack of material (Cichon and Koff,1980; Golladay and Noel,1978; Maslach, 1976; McGuire, 1979; Olander and Farrell,1979). These sources of job stress are found to be closely associated with sources of job dissatisfaction (Gross,1970; Warr and Wall,1975).

Pettegrew and Wolf (1982) classified a long list of identified stressors encountered in the literature into two categories; teaching-task related and teaching-role related. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978) grouped stressors of teachers into four categories through factorial analysis; pupil misbehavior, poor working conditions, time pressure, and poor school ethos. Milstein and Golaszewski (1983) conceptualized environmental stressors using a Person:Environment Fit framework and identified five areas; relationships at work, organizational studies and climate, factors intrinsic to the job, role in the organization and career development.

Little research has been done to find out how teachers cope with job related stress (Blase,1983). Also no systematic evidence

exists as to the teachers' perception of environmental factors which might reduce stress and burnout (Beasley, Myette, and Serna, 1983). These aforementioned researchers have made an effort to understand this area through their research work.

The demographic variables which have been related to teachers' stress and burnout include sex, age, grade level taught, number of years of teaching experience, type of community where they teach (Harmer,1979; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe,1978; Schwab and Iwanicki, 1982).

It is critical to understand how Venezuelan school teachers experience job stress and burnout, which are the stressors and the teachers' opinion of environmental factors which would reduce stress, in order to give out more possible effective strategies for helping teachers to cope with these situations throughout the school environment. In Venezuela, public awareness of job stress begins to increase, and stress management training has begun to be implemented in industry and business as a result, but this has not occurred in education. In fact, the concept of burnout is rarely known to Venezuelan psychologists and educators. It is the purpose of this study to pioneer into the field, in order to indicate to educational administrators and planners the importance of the problem.

Up to 1980, the Venezuelan Educational System was made up of three levels; Elementary School (6 years), Secondary Education (5 years), and Higher Education (3-5 years).

The new educational law, "Ley Orgánica de Educación"(1980), integrated the six years of Elementary School with the three years

of Secondary Education in order to conform a new level, called Educación Básica (Basic Education). Thus, the new structure became; Preschool Education (from birth to 5 years of age), Basic Education (a minimum of 9 years of schooling), Diversified and Professional Secondary Education (a minimum of 2 years), and Higher Education (3-5 years).

Over the last 28 years, the preparation of elementary school teachers in Venezuela, has evolved from a curriculum of 4 years in Normal Schools belonging to the secondary level of the school system(1956), to a university level career of 5 years, established by the aforementioned Law of Education (1980).

This evolution of elementary school teachers' training in Venezuela includes several intermediate changes accomplished in a rather fragmentary and inorganic way, which at moments determined the simultaneous functioning of different isolated sub-systems. Some of the main changes that took place during this period are the following (UPEL, 1983):

1959 -- An experiment is iniciated with a curriculum of 5 years; three basic years corresponding to the basic level of secondary education plus 2 years of professional education.

1969 -- The afore-mentioned curriculum is extended to all public and private normal schools in the country. A governmental decree establishes the equivalence of the titles given by the Normal School with those given by the Liceos. This equivalence abolished the existing discrimination

against elementary school teachers regarding their entrance to the University.

1972 -- The education of teachers is increased from 5 to 6 years, three basic and three professional years. The latter initiating a new track in the Diversified Cycle of seccondary education, Bachillerato Docente.

1980 -- The new law of education, Ley Orgánica de Educación(1980) promulgated on July of this year, establishes the preparation of teachers as a long term career of higher education. This means four to five years above secondary education.

New demands for Venezuelan teachers. The incorporation of Educación Básica (EB) as a new level of the school system and the requirement of a higher education degree for elementary school teachers as simultaneous innovation, represent a great challenge for planners and administrators, but mainly for the teachers themselves. To cope with these changes they have to, simultaneously, prepare themselves for dealing with the EB curriculum and receive in-service training in order to obtain the new required academic degree. The EB curriculum and philosophy demands from teachers a new role and hence competences which must be acquired. Teachers are asked to abandon the previous predominant role of classroom lecturers to assume a role of facilitators of learning opportunities, counselors, social promotors and researchers (Ministerio de Educación, 1981). Preparation to meet these demands occurs in

an atmosphere of haste and lack of preparation which places an exaggerated pressure on the teachers.

For teachers working in Caracas, this situation is accentuated by present living conditions in the capital city. In fact, as opposed to their rural colleagues, teachers in Caracas face higher cost of living, severe transportation problems, insecurity coming from a high delinquency rate, overpopulation, more aggresive students and a highly competitive job market.

The basic purpose of the present study is to contribute toward the understanding of job stress and burnout phenomena amongst school teachers in a transition period of innovation in the Venezuelan educational system. This study is exploratory and comparative. The comparison established is between teachers, acting in a conventional setting, and those functioning in schools which are in the process of implementing the new Educación Básica (EB) system, a major educational reform taking place throughout Venezuela. The specific objectives to be determined are: a) Perceived levels and symptoms of stress amongst Venezuelan school teachers; b) Environmental elements which induce stress in these school settings according to teachers' perception; c) Conditions conducive to diminish the stress amongst these educators; and d) The correlation and comparison of these factors with specific characteristics of the subject population studied such as age, sex, years of teaching experience, grade taught, number of students per class, and school geographic location.

METHOD

Subjects

A total of 488 school teachers served as subjects of the present study. 349(72%) are working in the Capital city, Caracas, and 139(28%) are working in the interior part of Venezuela; in the States Miranda, Aragua and Barinas.

The new Educación Básica system covers from the 1st to 9th grades, however, only school teachers from 1st to 6th grades were selected as subjects because the academic preparation and salary scale are different between these teachers and those from the 7th to 9th grades. More information is included in the introductory and discussion session about this aspect.

The subjects were contacted in two ways: a) The program director and instructors of the Experimental Program in Teacher training (Programa Nacional Experimental de Formacion Docente) were selected and contacted by the researcher. This training program is carried out all over the country simultaneously, usually on one of the university campuses, outside of the teaching hours of the school teachers, by instructors who are mostly university professors. The instructors selected for this study administered the questionnaire to the school teachers who are taking their classes; b) School psychologists and school authorities were contacted by the researcher, this selected personnel then administered the questionnaire to the school teachers who volunteered to respond in each school.

Data Collection Procedure

The persons who administered the questionnaire to the subjects were selected and contacted first, then the conditions of recollecting the instrument, such as charateristics and number of subjects, when, where and how to be distributed and collected were discussed. Also the type of school was discussed in order to find out if the teachers are from a public or private school, and to see if the school they contacted already had implemented the new Educación Básica system or not. The persons who administered the questionnaires were either personnel in the school or instructors in a teacher training program. They were university professors, psychologists, and school administrators.

There were three settings for the data collecting procedure : a) Questionnaires were distributed and filled in simultaneously in the class during one of the regular teacher training program sessions. It took 35 to 45 minutes to respond all three instruments in a small group form of ten to twenty teachers; b) Some subjects filled the questionnaire individually in the office, according to the time convenience of the subject and questionnaire administrator. The questionnaire was then returned inmediately; c) The administrator gave out the questionnaire, then the subjects filled it in at home, then returned it the next day, or within two or three days. In terms of distribution of three procedures, about 60% of the data were collected by method a, 20% were by method b, and rest were by method c.

In each setting, the subjects were very briefly given infor-

mation about the purpose and nature of the study and the time required, to fill in the questionnaire. They were told that their participation would be strictly voluntary. Almost all of them were willing to respond and showed interest on the topic.

The subjects received a package, containing a demographic column and three instruments with instructions. The subjects were asked to read carefully before responding each item and not to sign their names.

All the data were collected during a three week period in February of 1984.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this study include; a) Demographic data form, b) Inventario de Tensión Emocional (ITE) which measures the level of stress and its type, c) Inventario: Factores Generadores de Tensión Emocional en la Escuela (IFGTE) which assesses the factors inducing stress at school, d) Posibles Reductores de la Tensión Emocional (PRTE) which measures the importance of each factor the school teachers consider likely to reduce stress.

The procedure of construction of the questionnaires, and the description of them are discussed separately here.

The ITE was a translation and adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). The IFGTE and PRTE were constructed on the base of the studies done by Beasley, Myette, and Serna (1983), Milstein and Golaszewski (1983) respectively, and on the basis of the opinion of Venezuelan school teachers and experts in the field. The procedure for refining the instruments in Spanish was similar for all three instruments.

First, the MBI was translated by three bilingual speaking persons (Spanish and English) who are university professors, researchers, and have experience of constructing instruments in Venezuela.

Five persons were then selected to review and refine all three instruments. The selection criteria for these five persons were: a) to have several years of experience of teaching or supervising school teachers; b) to know the present situation of this Venezuelan educational systems change; c) to know the curriculum of Educación Básica; and d) to read English fluently.

The next step consisted in joining these five persons, who then refined the instruments together with six other counselors working with school teachers, and then going to schools to interview two to four teachers in order to get feedback on the three instruments. During this stage, 32 school teachers filled in the preliminary questionnaire, shared their opinions about the instruments as well as the actual situation of their stress. Several items were added, deleted, or modified according to the opinion of the teachers. This procedure also permitted to adjust the terms used in these instruments in order to fit their common vocabulary.

Inventario de Tensión Emocional (Maslach Burnout Inventory) is the translated version in Spanish of Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)(Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

The MBI consists of twenty two Likert-type items and is divided into three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonaliza-

tion and Personal Accomplishment. For each of these subscales, separate scores are provided for the frequency (how often people have these feelings), and intensity (the strength of these feelings) of burnout.

The frequency scale for each of the 22 items was labeled in each case from 1 ("a few times a year or less") to 6 ("every day"). The intensity scale ranged from 1 ("very mild, barely noticeable") to 7 ("very strong"). The subjects were instructed to put an "x" on the number that best described themselves or, if the feeling described in the statement was absent, to mark an "x" on "0" (never).

The Emotional Exhaustion subscale assesses feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work. The Depersonalization subscale measures an insensitivity and impersonal response towards the recipients of one's care, service, treatment, or instruction. The Personal Accomplishment subscale assesses feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people.

For both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales, higher mean scores correspond to higher degrees of experienced burnout, while for the personal accomplishment subscale, lower mean scores correspond to higher degrees of experienced burnout.

Internal consistency reliability coefficients ranging from .75 to .90 were obtained for both frequency and intensity on the three subscales using Cronbach's coefficient alpha when MBI was

was used with classroom teachers (Iwanicki and Schwab 1981). Coefficients from .60 to .82 were reported for test-retest reliability (Maslach and Jackson, 1981).

Inventario: Factor Generadores de Tensión Emocional en la Escuela(IFGTE) (STRESS INDUCING FACTORS) was administered to examine how much school teachers perceived, as a source of stress, each one of the described school situations. It consisted of forty one (41) items, and was responded on a 7 point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (means "this situation does not produce stress in my personal case") to 6 (means "this situation produces stress very much in my personal case").

Items were grouped in six categories including; a) relationships at work b) organizational structure and climate. c)factors intrinsic to the job. d) role in the organization e) career development, and e) situation specific to the implementation of "Educación Básica". The framework of the first five of these six categories was originally developed by Cooper and Marshall (1981), who employed the French and Caplan's Person:Environment Fit theory (1972), and then modified by Milstein and Golaszewski (1983). The last category was added in this research purpose to find out how teachers perceive the particular present situation in implementing Educación Básica as a significant stressor. The reliability and content validity of the instrument used in the study of Milstein and Golaszewski (1983) was informed as an acceptable level; however the validity and reliability of the IFGTE used in this study needs to be done and is a immediate research goal.

Posibles Reductores de la Tensión Emocional (PRTE) (Potential Reducers of Stress). Teachers were asked to indicate how important they considered each stated situation likely to reduce their present felt stress.

It has 20 items, a 7 point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 to 7. "0" indicates the described situation was not considered as an important factor in reducing his/her stress. "3" means moderate, and "6" means very important.

These items were grouped into four categories; a) better working conditions, b) institutional support, c) career development and d) economical rewards.

The reliability and validity are being studied under this research process.

RESULTS

Stress and Burnout Level of the teachers

An inspection of the mean scores obtained on the MBI subscales, for the total subject population (Table 1) indicates that Venezuelan teachers in general fall into low levels of experiencing burnout, according to the three levels low, moderate, and high, established by Maslach and Jackson (1981) (Table 2). Personal Accomplishment Intensity was the only subscale which fell into the moderate level.

Insert Table 1 and 2 about here

It should be noted that though it is true that over half of the teacher population falls into the lower range of experienced

burnout, an appreciable remainder is distributed between the moderate and high levels. In fact almost one out of every two teachers experiences moderate to high depersonalization and frequency of emotional exhaustion, and one out of three moderate to high ranges of intensity of emotional exhaustion. (Table 3)

Insert Table 3 About Here

The comparison of teachers working within the Educación Básica(EB) system with those working for conventional schools, yields a significant difference only in the frequency dimension of Emotional Exhaustion ($F(1,350)=11.762$; $p=.0007$). These ANOVA results, presented in Table 4, indicate that teachers working in the EB system experience more emotional exhaustion than their colleagues of traditional schools.

Although the difference between the mean scores of the remaining subscales are not significant, they indicate that teachers belonging to the EB schools tend to experience higher levels of depersonalized responses and feel more accomplished than their counterparts working in conventional schools.

Insert Table 4 About Here

The ANOVA comparing stress levels between male and female teachers shows a significant difference only for the frequency dimension of the Personal Accomplishment subscale, $F(1,370)=4.297$, $p=.039$. Here, the lower mean obtained by male teachers indicates that they experience a lack of personal accomplishment more fre-

quently than female teachers.

Even though the rest of the MBI subscales do not show significant differences between male and female scores, it is interesting to note that male teachers tend to experience higher levels of stress than do female teachers.

The ANOVA comparing teachers working in Caracas with those working in communities of the interior part of the country, show a significant difference for the EE subscale both in the intensity ($F(1.327)=10.548$; $p=.0013$) and frequency ($F(1.368)=11.12$; $p=.0013$) dimensions. This result indicates that teachers working in Caracas experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion than do those teaching in the interior part of the country. The other two factors do not show significant differences between the two groups. But here, again, mean scores suggest that teachers in Caracas experience, in general, a higher level of stress as compared with their colleagues of the interior.

Results of the one-way ANOVA comparing educators teaching in different grades of Educación Básica (from 1st to 6th grade) do not show any significant difference. This indicates that grade levels of Educación Básica do not represent in themselves sources of job-related stress for Venezuelan elementary teachers.

Intercorrelations between MBI subscale, as might be expected, show that frequency and intensity are significantly and highly related in all three factors(Table 5). Besides, four other significant relationships were found between the frequency and intensity dimensions of Emotional Exhaustion and the frequency and intensity

dimensions of Depersonalization.

The Personal Accomplishment factor in its two dimensions shows a negative correlation with the other two factors. The magnitud of these non-significant coeficients indicates an independence of the PA factor in relation to EE and DP.

Insert Table 5 About Here

Correlations between MBI subscales and the variables, age, years of experience and number of students in the class produced only three significant relationships out of a total of eighteen potential relationships. Age appeared negatively related to Depersonalization in its frequency dimension ($r=-.10$; $p=0.28$; $n=358$), which indicates that the older the teachers, the less frequently they experience feelings of depersonalization. This could be interpreted in the sense that older teachers are the ones who have remained in the profession probably because they are more vocationally oriented towards teaching and, hence, tend to establish with the pupil a more positive, human relationship.

Number of students correlates positively with Emotional Exhaustion in its intensity dimension ($r=.14$; $p=.011$; $n=277$), and with the frequency dimension of Personal Accomplishment ($r=.12$; $p=.016$; $n=323$), which indicates, that the more students per class the teacher has, the more he or she experience EE, as well as, the more frequently he feels accomplished.

Stress Inducing Factors

An analysis of the data presented in Table 6. indicated that the categories of career development ($\bar{x}$=3.25) and factors intrinsic to the job $\bar{x}$=2.90) were perceived as the major stress inducing sources by Venezuelan school teachers as well as the category related to situation specific to Educación Básica (EB)($\bar{x}$=2.86).

Insert Table 6 About Here

A closer scrutiny of the items (Table 7) showed that insufficient pay was perceived as the greatest stressor. The ten (10) situations which teachers considered as higher degree of stress sources; a) insufficient pay, b) dealing with students who have discipline and learning problems, c) assignment of academic responsibility without adequate resources and material, d) too much to do outside of the working hours, e) lack of official support to participate in in-service training, f) demands from the new teaching method, g) too many students per teacher h) lack of the institutional protection to face danger coming from the delinquents, i) too much work to finish within the working hours and j) authoritarian attitudes of the supervisors.

Insert Table 7 About Here

A research question was formulated to determine whether specific situations as a consequence of the implementation of Educación Básica, would perceived as stronger stressors by the teachers who work in the EB system than by the ones in the traditional

one. The ANOVA procedure indicated that significant differences were evident, $p < .05$, on all the sub-categories of stress inducing factors (Table 8) except career development. It indicated that the teachers working in the EB system perceived the above five categories; a) relationships at work, b) organizational structure, c) factors intrinsic to the job, d) role in the organization and e) situation specific to EB, as stronger stressors than their counterparts did, even though the level of stress experienced by teachers both in EB and traditional system was not significantly different, except for frequency of emotional exhastion experienced.

Insert Table 8 About Here

Significant differences were found on all the specific situations referring to Educación Básica(Table 9). The EB teachers reported the following conditions as significantly stronger stressors than the teachers in traditional systems did; a) have to assimilate too much information in a short time, b) demands from the new teaching methods, c) demand of teaching tasks which he/she was not prepared for, d) demand of extra time for in-service training, and e) assignment of academic responsibility without appropriate resources provided.

Insert Table 9 About Here

In Table 10, the perceived importance of the six categories of stress inducing factors are analyzed by sex, location and grade level taught.

There appears to be no significant difference in perceived importance of stress inducers with the grade the teachers had under their responsibility, apparently indicating a homogenous situation, or one where unidentified elements compensate each other.

Insert Table 10 About Here

Teachers in the interior part of the country, $F(1,458)=4.40$, $p=.037$, and male teachers, $F(1,450)=13.46$, $p=.0003$, perceived the factors which referred to relationships at work as stronger stressors than their counterparts. Teachers in Caracas, $F(1,409)=14.83$, $p=.0001$, and female, $f(1,403)=4.87$, $p=.028$, considered the situation specific to EB system as higher stressors than teachers in interior.

Female teachers perceived the factors related to organizational structure and climate, such as restrictions on her behaviors, lack of identification with school, and ineffective internal communication systems, as stronger stressor than males. In comparison with teachers working in the interior, teachers in Caracas reported, as stronger stressors those factors, intrinsic to the job such as dealing with problematic students, lack of materials and time, and too much work.

To explore the relationship between the six categories of stress inducing factors and teachers' age, number of years of teaching, and number of students per class, the Pearson correlation coefficient procedure was applied. Among the potential 18 relationships, only two were found to be significantly correlated. The

more number of students teacher had per class, the more he/she considered the factors intrinsic to the job and situation specific to EB ($r=.11$, $p=.016$, $n=350$) as stressors.

Situations Perceived as a Potential Reducers of Stress

In order to find out how important teachers consider each possible organizational situation which could facilitate the reduction of their own stress, they were given 20 items to respond on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 0(considered a non important factor) to 6 (considered a very important factor).

Table 11 shows that 16 out of 20 items were responded on the scale between 4 and 6. Several items which were informed as more important factors are, better opportunities for professional actualization ($\bar{x}=5.58$), having more specialists in counseling, school psychologists, and social workers who could take care of students' problems more efficiently ($\bar{x}=5.50$), having more and better support from parents ($\bar{x}=5.36$), more socio-medical assistance ($\bar{x}=5.36$), and having more facilitative type of supervision at work ($\bar{x}=5.29$).

Insert Table 11 About Here

When the items are grouped in four subcategories as presented in Table 12, the importance given by the teachers to a stress reducing situation are in the following order; career developmenet ($\bar{x}=5.32$), institutional support ($\bar{x}=5.22$), economical reward ($\bar{x}=4.70$), and better working conditions ($\bar{x}=4.21$).

Insert Table 12 About Here

The items which were considered as more highly important in each category are described as follows. The sub-category of Career Development includes situations such as having better systems of promotion, more facilitative type of supervision, and having more opportunity for professional actualization. The Institutional Support category includes factors such as more accessibility to specialists at school, more soci-medical assistance, stronger parental support, more incentives from schcol authorities, more cooperation among teachers, better planned school discipline systems, and having more opportunity to participate in decision making at school. The sub-category of Economic Reward consists of situations like better salary scale, having recreational programs for the teachers, and pay for over time work. The Better Working condition category included several items considered very important such as more adequate teaching material, improving educational environment, less students per class, and having less paper work.

The results of a series of one-way analysis of variance on the four sub-categories by educational system, sex, region, grade level taught, in general, did not render significant differences except in three conditions.

The significant mean difference for better working conditions between the two educational systems, $F(1,399)=11.232$, $p=.0009$, indicated that the teachers who work in the EB system considered better working conditions as a more critical way to reduce their stress, compared to those who work in the traditional educational system (Table 13). However, improvement of working conditions was suggested by teachers both Educación Básica ($\tilde{x}=4.30$) and in

traditional system ($\bar{x}$=3.81) as a highly important element, which could reduce teachers' stress at work.

Insert Table 13 About Here

There was significant difference between male ($\bar{x}$=5.03) and female teachers ($\bar{x}$=5.37) on Career Development, $F(1,445)=4.551$, $p=.033$. It can be interpreted that, though more important for female teachers, both sexes consider a more favorable situation of their career development as a factor which would help reduce their perceived stress. Female teachers ($\bar{x}$=4.75) also considered significantly higher the importance of Better Economic Assistance as a possible stress reducing source than male ($\bar{x}$=4.23) teachers, $F(1,422)=5.881$, $p=.051$.

The Pearson Correlation statistical procedure was applied to determine the relationship between these four sub-categories with age, years of teaching experience, and number of students per class. There was significant negative correlation between age and the sub-category of institutional support ($r=-.11$, $p=.010$, $n=414$) and with economic assistance ($r=-.08$, $p=.048$, $n=411$). The older the teachers are, the less they consider Institutional Support and Economic Assistance to help them to reduce stress.

The number of students per class was found to have a significant positive correlation with the sub-category of better working condition ($r=.16$, $p=.001$, $n=359$) and Institutional Support ($r=.14$, $p=.003$, $n=371$). The more students the teacher had in class, the more importance he/she gave these two categories as possible ways to reduce stress.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the major findings of the present study has been to establish the existence of different perceived levels of stress and burnout when comparing school teachers who function in the EB setting from those acting in a traditional one. The change in role from lecturers to being a combination of facilitators, counselors, social promotors, and researchers, required by the EB process of school teachers induces more stress. It has been found that these teachers; a) tend to experience a higher level of emotional exhaustion, b) perceive most of the stress inducers described in the questionnaire as stronger stressors than their counterparts working in conventional schools, and c) give more importance to the improvement of present working conditions as a way to reduce their stress.

This is further confirmed by the observation that EB teachers perceive situations specifically related to EB implementation such as extra in-service training, demands from the new teaching methods, demands from teaching tasks for which they are not prepared for, and lack of appropiate teaching resources as particularly strong inducers of stress. Outside of the EB innovation itself, additional causes for these observed results can be the hasty way in which the EB system has been implemented in many settings, as well as the simultaneous pressure imposed upon the teachers by the new legal requirement of a higher educational degree. The validity of these assumptions will be tested in a future research project.

Still it is interesting to note that the Career Development contained the major stressors perceived by Venezuelan teachers, yet one of the items grouped under this category "Opportunities for professional actualization", was considered to be the most potentially important element for reducing stress levels.

It is apparent that the government must offer effective plans of social and economical support for the teachers involved in the EB innovation in order to make this transition less toiling.

Another important finding is the higher level of emotional exhaustion, and in general higher levels of stress experienced by teachers working in Caracas, in comparison to those working in more rural settings, in the interior of the country. This is understandable if one considers that over four fifths of the total population of Venezuela lives on the coast, a great deal of these people living in Caracas and nearby regions. Numerous studies have registered the stress induced by living in large metropolitan areas, and Caracas is by no means an exception, but rather a paragon, because of its expensive living conditions, overpopulation, high crime rate, and lack of public facilities. There are though subtle differences which merit explanation, Caracas teachers perceive factors intrinsic to the job, and specific to the EB system as the stronger stressors, while their rural colleagues consider relationships at work as the stronger source of stress. This is an indication of the more traditional setting in which the rural teachers function, not so task achievement oriented as in the Metropolitan area. This situations specific to the EB system are more important stressors to the Caracas teachers, because in

the city, the change is being done more systematically with intensive supervision and higher success expectation than in the rest of the country.

Male teachers feel less accomplished and experience more frequently feeling of stress than female teachers. This findings could indicate that males are less comfortable in their roles, because as in other countries the profession has come to be considered a female one.

Surprisingly, pressure from political parties on teachers was found to be the lowest stressful source. This would seem strange because teachers have been one of the easiest targets for politicians and union leaders in obtaining political support or votes. A possible explanation for this unexpected result, could be that the questionnaire of this study was applied two months after the presidential elections, a period of political recess and tranquility.

Venezuela is currently facing a tough economic situation brought about by a sharp reduction in oil prices, increase in inflation, and the burden of a heavy foreign debt. This aggravates the already difficult existing economic situation of Venezuelan teachers. Albornoz (1977) considers that elementary school teachers in Venezuela could be technically classified as paraprofesionals together with nurses, executive secretaries, and other "middle rank" jobs. This study's findings indicate that "insufficient pay" is the greatest single stress inducer felt by Venezuelan teachers. Teacher labor unions have been demanding salary hikes for several years now, it is a constant issue of the media, and has been the principal cause of several national strikes. Our findings confirm

the problem, and it can be predicted that it will continue to be an issue as well as a heavy stressor, because the implementation of the new EB system does not entail any increase in wages or economic benefits.

The Educación Básica innovation will require greater responsibility, accountability, the learning of new skills and roles without any consequential reward. It is evident that the government should take this into account before advancing further in this nation-wide educational transition.

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Table 1

Summary data of burnout scale factors (Inventario de Tensión Emocional) for total group

MBI ubscal	Mean	S.D.	n
Emotional Exhaustion			
Frequency	1.5604	1.0132	370
Intensity	1.8598	1.1815	329
Depersonalization			
Frequency	0.8267	0.8206	374
Intensity	0.9913	1.0071	344
Personal Accomplishment			
Frequercy	5.1424	0.8031	380
Intensity	4.9211	1.1515	344

*Lack of Personal Accomplishment factor was negatively scaled.

Table 2

Categorization of MBI factor scores from the MBI manual

MBI Subscale	Range of experienced burnout		
	Low (lower third)	Moderate (middle third)	High (upper third)
Emotional Exhaustion			
Frequency	≤ 1.89	2.00 - 3.22	≥ 3.33
Intensity	≤ 2.78	2.89 - 4.33	≥ 4.44
Depersonalization			
Frequency	≤ 1.00	1.20 - 2.20	≥ 2.40
Intensity	≤ 1.20	1.40 - 2.80	≥ 3.00
Personal Accomplishment			
Frequency	≥ 5.00	4.88 - 4.25	≤ 4.13
Intensity	≥ 5.50	5.38 - 4.63	≤ 4.50

*Lack of Personal Accomplishment factor was negatively scaled

Table 3

Distribution of total teachers on MBI subscales by levels according to the norm (MBI manual, Maslach & Jackson, 1981)

MBI subscale (ITE)	Range of Experienced burnout						Total	
	Low		Moderate		High			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Emotional Exhaustion								
Frequency	206	56	97	26	67	18	370	100
Intensity	223	68	84	26	22	7	329	101
Depersonalization								
Frequency	189	51	146	39	39	10	374	100
Intensity	185	54	133	39	26	8	344	100
*Personal Accomplishment								
Frequency	331	87	33	9	16	4	380	101
Intensity	181	53	112	33	51	15	344	101

*Lack of Personal Accomplishment factor was negatively scaled

Table 4

Summary table and oneway analysis of variance of burnout scale factors by educational systems (Educación Básica vs. Traditional)

Subscale		Teachers in Educacion Basica	Teachers in traditional system	ANOVA F	sig. level	df
Emotional Exhaustion						
Frequency	$\bar{x}$	1.6632	1.1910	11.762	*	
Frequency	sd	1.0058	0.9524	11.762	0.0007	1/350
	n	288	64			
	$\bar{x}$	1.9440	1.6196			
Intensity	sd	1.1711	1.2097	3.617	* 0.0581	1/307
	n	250	59			
Depersonalization	$\bar{x}$	0.8491	0.7194			
Frequency	sd	0.8350	0.7556	1.355	0.2451	1/350
	n	285	67			
	$\bar{x}$	1.0343	0.7828			
Intensity	sd	1.0182	0.8512	3.074	0.0805	1/324
	n	268	58			
Personal Accomplishment	$\bar{x}$	5.1730	4.9835			
Frequency	sd	0.7441	1.0420	3.024	0.0829	1/355
	n	289	68			
	$\bar{x}$	4.9352	4.6689			
Intensity	sd	1.1244	1.2672	2.514	0.1138	1/321
	n	266	57			

* P < .05

Table 5

Intercorrelations between ITE (MBI) subscales for total teacher group

	Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
	Frequency	Intensity	Frequency	Intensity	Frequency	Intensity
Emotional Exhaustion						
Frequency	--	* .87 p=.001	* .29 p=.001	* .30 p=.001	-.06 p=.141	-.02 p=.356
Intensity		--	* .25 p=.001	* .35 p=.001	-.04 p=.274	-.00 p=.466
Depersonalization						
Frequency			--	* .85 p=.001	-.07 p=.102	-.06 p=.120
Intensity				--	-.09 p=.057	-.07 p=.097
Personal Accomplishment						
Frequency					--	.56 p=.001
Intensity						--

* $p < .05$

Table 6

Means and standard deviations on sub categories of stress inducing factors

Categories	Mean	S.D.
Relationships at work	2.1141	1.6952
Organizational structure and climate	2.5136	1.3809
Factors intrinsic to the job	2.9085	1.2364
Role in the organization	2.3686	1.3610
Career Development	3.2541	1.6077
Situation specific to the implementation of Educacion Basica	2.8637	1.4230

Note:
Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very much).

Table 7

Summary data of the ten(10) highest stressors

Situations	Mean	s.d.	Category
Sueldo insuficiente e injusto	4.02	2.03	CD
Alumnos con problemas de aprendizaje y conducta	3.88	1.81	FI
Asignación de responsabilidades académicas sin los recursos y materiales adecuados	3.50	1.99	RO
Demasiado trabajo que cumplir fuera del horario laboral	3.38	2.02	FI
Falta de apoyo oficial para realizar cursos de mejoramiento profesional	3.31	2.20	CD
Demanda de nuevos métodos de ensenanza	3.14	2.02	FI
Exagerado número de alumnos a mi cargo	3.09	2.08	FI
Falta de protección en la escuela para enfrentar los peligros de la delincuencia	3.07	2.26	FI
Demasiadas tareas que cumplir dentro de mi horario laboral	3.00	1.92	FI
Actitud autoritaria del Personal Directivo	2.93	2.26	OS

Note: Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very important)

CD; Career Development OS; Organizational Structure and Climate
FI; Factors Intrinsic to the job RO; Role in the Organization

Table 8

Summary data and one way analysis of variance, sub-categories of stress inducing factors by educational system (Educación Básica vs. Traditional system)

Categories		Teachers in Educacion Basica	Teachers in Traditional System	ANOVA F	sig. level	df
Relationships at work	$\bar{x}$ sd n	2.2072 1.6920 345	1.7131 1.4550 88	6.313	* .0124	1/431
Organizational structure and climate	$\bar{x}$ sd n	2.6454 1.2756 286	2.1498 1.6498 69	7.429	** .0067	1/353
Factor intrinsic to the job	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.0668 1.2756 297	2.2887 1.1604 71	25.416	** .0000	1/366
Role in the organization	$\bar{x}$ sd n	2.4996 1.2598 290	1.9264 1.5366 74	11.111	** .0009	1/362
Career Development	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.3117 1.5535 320	3.0854 1.7591 82	1.311	.2529	1/400
Situation specific to the implementation of Educacion Basica	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.0540 1.3338 314	2.0649 1.3991 74	32.333	** .0000	1/386

* $p < .05$
** $P < .01$

Note: Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0(not at all) to 6 (very much)

Table 9

Summary data and one way analysis of variance, specific situations in the implementation of the Educacion Basica, by system (Educación Básica vs. Traditional)

Situation		Teachers in Educacion Basica	Teachers in Traditional System	ANOVA F	sig. level	df
have to assimilate too much knowledge in a short time	$\bar{x}$ sd n	2.5681 1.8479 345	1.8161 2.1294 87	11.639	**.0007	1/430
demand of new teaching method	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.3584 1.9031 346	2.1294 2.0690 85	27.477	**.0000	1/429
demand of teaching tasks which they are not prepared for	$\bar{x}$ sd n	2.6231 2.0435 337	1.6163 1.7965 86	17.432	**.0000	1/421
demand of extra time for in-service training	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.0118 1.9060 339	1.9070 1.8574 86	23.283	**.0000	1/423
assignment of academic responsibility without appropriate resources	$\bar{x}$ sd n	3.7076 1.9198 340	2.8537 1.9317 84	13.056	**.0003	1/422

** $p < .01$

Note: Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very much)

Table 10

One way ANOVA, sub-categories of stress inducing factors by sex, region and grade taught

Categories		Sex	Region	Grade
Relationships at work	ANOVA F	** 13.462	* 4.398	0.631
	sig. level	.0003	.0365	.7300
	df	1/450	1/458	5/372
Organizational structure and climate	ANOVA F	* 4.174	0.557	1.002
	sig. level	.0417	.4559	.4295
	df	1/370	1/378	5/305
Factors instrinsic to the job	ANOVA F	1.973	* 5.236	1.252
	sig. level	.1609	.0227	.2741
	df	1/381	1/388	5/316
Role in the organization	ANOVA F	2.103	0.213	0.924
	sig. level	.1479	.6444	.4878
	df	1/378	1/385	5/308
Career Development	ANOVA F	3.081	0.335	0.537
	sig. level	.0800	.5632	.8061
	df	1/416	1/423	5/344
Situation specific to the implementation of Educacion Basica	ANOVA F	* 4.866	** 14.825	1.042
	sig. level	.0279	.0001	.4017
	df	1/403	1/409	5/330

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
Note: Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very much)

Table 11

Summary data of stress reducing factors ; The ten(10) factors which teachers considered as higher reducers of stress

Factor	Mean	s.d.	category
Mayor oportunidad de realización de actualización y mejoramiento profesional	5.58	1.13	CD
Mayor apoyo y asistencia técnica especializada (Orientador, Psicologos, y trabajadores sociales, etc.)	5.50	1.30	IS
Mayor dotación de recursos didácticos	5.49	1.22	BWC
Mayor asistencia social (servicio médico-asistencial)	5.36	1.41	IS
Mayor apoyo de los padres	5.36	1.36	IS
Supervisiones con carácter de ayuda y orientación al docente	5.29	1.41	CD
Mayor estímulo y reconocimiento por parte de los Directivos del plantel	5.13	1.59	IS
Mayor cooperación entre los maestros	5.11	1.55	IS
Establecimiento de normas escolares que ayuden a resolver problemas disciplinarios	5.08	1.63	IS
Mayor participación en la toma de decisiones en asuntos académicos	5.06	1.48	IS

Note: Mean scores are based on a scale ranging from 0 (not at all) to 6 (very important)

CD; Career Development IS; Institutional Support
BWC; Better Working Conditions

Table 12

Summary data of four categories of conditions which would reduce stress

Categories	Mean	S.D.	n. of items
Better working conditions	4.2065	1.1970	7
Institutional support	5.2221	1.1092	7
Career Development	5.3158	1.1670	3
Economic rewards	4.6991	1.5324	3

Table 13

One way ANOVA. subcategories of stress reducing factors with educationalsystem (Educación Básica vs. Traditional) and sex.

Categories		Educational system	Sex
Better working conditions	ANOVA F sig.level df.	**11.232 0.0009 1/399	0.097 0.7562 1/414
Institutional support	ANOVA F sig. level df.	0.049 0.8256 1/409	2.270 0.1326 1/426
Career Development	ANOVA F sig. level df.	0.317 0.5735 1/427	*4.551 0.0334 1/445
Economic rewards	ANOVA F sig. level df.	1.228 0.2685 1/405	*5.881 0.0157 1/422

*p <.05
**p <.01